

ADMINISTRATION: A STUDY ON TRAFFIC WARDENS IN KARACHI

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Abstract

The study investigated the myriad of psychological and physical stress factors affecting traffic wardens in Karachi. It was hypothesized that traffic wardens do not feel satisfied or stressed with their jobs and also that job tenure has no relation to their job satisfaction and stress. A mixed method approach with 15 semi-structured interviews and 50 survey forms was adopted using convenience sampling. Job stress and satisfaction was measured using a self-made questionnaire ($r = .797$ & $.582$). The analysis indicated that traffic wardens were satisfied with their jobs and employment duration was not found to be associated with job satisfaction and stress.

Keywords: Human Factors, Job Satisfaction, Job Stress, Traffic Wardens

JEL Classification: Z 000

Introduction

Stress is a leading psychological factor resulting in the employees' dysfunctional behavior. The unfavorable working conditions and practices give rise to stress. This is especially true for the employees of the service sector as they are exposed to a multitude of factors that contribute to their psychological well-being (Selye, 1987). Besides having tedious hours, short breaks and a burdened working day, they also have to be people oriented (Kolt, 2003).

With the urbanization, Pakistan has a greater demand for various transportation facilities. It also remains a point of concern whether the relevant authorities are aware of the physical and psychological threats that the traffic wardens' jobs pose and whether the traffic wardens are provided with the necessary technical and soft skills training, safety equipment and other resources to deal with job challenges (Mehwish, 2011).

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Karachi is the 7th most populous city in the world with 23+ million residents having more than 3.9 million total registered vehicles, the city deals with a massive load of 3.5 million vehicles daily plying on its streets (The News, 2016). Karachi has only 3200 traffic wardens equipped with feeble supply of resources and technological equipment.

Owing to the nature of their profession and working conditions, traffic wardens are subjected to a low morale, lack of respect and low credibility. Many people threaten traffic wardens when faced with violating tickets. Nevertheless, some also seem to be stuck in the old rut of corruption and bribery. Traffic wardens in Pakistan have also found to be affected by the prevalent political system in the country (Tabraiz, Ahmad, Shehzadi & Asif, 2015). The system offers little career progression to the traffic wardens. Also, at times, wardens face issues relating to poor management of the hierarchical structure and lack of job clarity.

Keeping in view the above-mentioned factors, the study was carried out with the aim to explore the physical and psychological demands faced by traffic wardens.

Literature Review

In a country like Pakistan where the environmental pollution is among the severest problems around the globe (Ahmed, 2014), many of its residents succumb to various diseases having inhaled the toxic air around them. The traffic wardens, with their round the clock duty hours on the roads, are definitely amongst the most exposed to various kinds of environmental pollution. It was found that traffic wardens had alarmingly high lead levels in their system (Sadaruddin, 1992).

Traffic wardens are exposed to vehicle exhausts, which contain lead, during their long duty hours. Pervez et al. (2015) carried out a research to evaluate the lead levels in traffic wardens in Lahore, Pakistan. It was found that a considerably high level of lead (18.76) in the wardens on traffic duty than those on administrative duty (12.00). Moreover, Agha, Sadaruddin and Khatoon (2005) concluded that the blood lead level among traffic wardens was quite high as compared to that of the control group who are living in comparatively hygienic and less traffic zone. The study claimed that the traffic officers in Karachi tend to have an awfully higher lead level than traffic officers in Islamabad.

Traffic wardens are also exposed to noise pollution, which impact their mental and physical health, Sliman, Ibrahim and Ahmed (2015) carried out a cross-sectional study in Khartoum and found that 52.2% of the participants suffered from annoyance owing to the high noise pollution, 26.1% had tinnitus.

The much needed protective equipment (such as ear plugs, head gear, etc.) are not provided exposing them to serious hazards. A study conducted on 100 traffic wardens in Ambala city found out that 5% reported hearing to be below average, 17% reported partial hearing problem. Over 98% did not wear any protective equipment (Singh, Bansal, Goel, Chhikara & Singh, 2015). A study in Duhok, Iraq on traffic wardens revealed that 100% of the participants were a victim of utmost exhaustion, 80% suffered from nervous breakdowns and headaches (Tahir & Khaled, 2015). The psychological

effects found in wardens include sleep disturbances, irritation, exhaustion, and anxiety (Shahid & Bashir, 2013).

Furthermore, Tabraiz, Ahmad, Shehzadi and Asif (2015) found out that the noise level was significantly high due to the heavy traffic and repetitive loud horns from the vehicles posing a continued threat to traffic wardens. Gupta, Mittal, Kumar and Singh (2011) evaluated the respiratory problems in wardens the results unveiled that 66% of the participants reported repeated coughing, shortness of breath, and sharp pain in their respiratory tract. Another study concluded that over 22.3% of traffic policemen with five or less than five years of service have affected lungs (Herald, 2016).

Female traffic wardens have reported high psychological issues which caused a gradual disappearance of them. The News (2015), in multiple interviews with male and female traffic wardens, found out that the main issues as lack of housing facilities, low increments and no promotions to higher positions adding to their insecurity and frustration. Some of the female traffic wardens reported harassment from public and would feel uncomfortable while performing their duties. The inadequate facilities for water, washrooms, housing and seating have contributed in addition to the lack of moral support, duty shifts and workload (The News, 2015). Mohanraj and Natesan (2015) explored the stress of female traffic wardens in Tamil Nadu, India, found that their stress had a negative relationship with job satisfaction.

Working on the road for several hours, traffic wardens may be infected with skin diseases and many other ailments. And with the absence of medical facilities or medical insurance for them, it is no surprise that they would succumb to these infections. On the other hand, many traffic wardens do not belong to the metropolis hence, had to travel the long distance back to their home in the absence of fuel and transport allowance. Those who live in the hostel, have to face issues like lack of power supply, almost no furniture, no TV area and common lounge (The News, 2015).

Traffic policemen are the victims of both verbal and physical abuse by public. Due to the nature of their job and debatable public perception regarding them, they are vulnerable to abuse. Winrow (2010) reported that there have been over 80 incidents of sheer violence against traffic policemen in a year. Out of which 16% included physical abuse with 19% being racial abuse. Various incidents of verbal abuse have been reported on the streets of Karachi (Chaudhry, 2016). People become furious and even try to physically attack the traffic police officer and/or the equipment he is carrying like camera, e-challan book etc. and attempts on their lives.

A fully functioning person with a healthy mental state has a positive relationship between their life satisfaction, self-efficacy and their inverse relationship with burn out (Capri, Ozkendir, Ozkurt & Karakus, 2012). A study established that traffic policemen suffered from more burn out than people of different professionals, since they have to tolerate conflict from the public and little to no support from their colleagues and seniors (Morash et al., 2008). Another research designed by Jackson and Maslach (1982) determined that burned out police officers show a higher tendency for outbursts of anger, less family engagement and a higher divorce rate. Lack of support from staff and inadequate resources of traffic wardens effects their overall life satisfaction, self-efficacy and burnout (Biggam, Power, MacDonald, Carcary, and Moodie, 1997).

Deb, Chakraborty, Chatterjee and Srivastava, (2008) studied the job-related stress and coping strategies in traffic wardens and found that 79.4% of traffic wardens appeared to be stressed out. Reasons reported were lack of communication, hectic and prolonged work hours, work pressure, increasing number of vehicles, scorching heat, lack of co-operation from the public, no co-ordination with co-workers, witnessing accidents on duty hours, vulgar language from the public, emasculation and inadequate infrastructure facilities. Their coping responses involved watching television, accepting their brutal reality and sharing their lives with friends and family.

Research on relationship between job tenure and job satisfaction has shown inconsistent results. Scholars established existence of a positive relationship between the two suggesting that dissatisfied workers quit their organizations whereas satisfied workers stay (Sarker, Crossman & Chinmeteepituck, 2003). The more experienced the person is, the higher the probability that the person has found a job which matches his skills set and hence satisfied as compared to a fresher (Clark, Oswald & Warr, 1996). Further, there are more opportunities for promotion, power and status for the employees who stay with the organization for a longer period of time, all of these are somehow linked to higher job satisfaction (Kalleberg & Matsteakaasa, 2001; Miller & Form, 1951)

In the light of the above researches, it is established that poor physical environment, adverse working conditions and hours and the lack of resources to carry out one's job leads to job stressors that in turn sets fertile ground for numerous psychological problems which are the catalyst for one's general dissatisfaction with life, followed by low self-esteem.

For the purpose of this study, the following research questions were postulated:

1. What are the physical and psychological demands faced by traffic wardens providing their services on the roads of Karachi?
2. Are the traffic wardens in Karachi satisfied with their jobs?
3. Do they feel stressed because of their jobs?
4. Is their job satisfaction and job stress associated with the duration of their employment?
5. Do they feel that adequate equipment is being provided to them to carry out their job duties effectively?

The first question was to be explored through qualitative interviews and thus no hypothesis was generated for it. For the remaining questions, the following null hypotheses were proposed:

H1: The traffic wardens in Karachi do not feel satisfied with their jobs.

H2: The traffic wardens do not feel stressed because of their jobs.

H3: There is no relationship between the traffic wardens' employment duration and job satisfaction.

H4: There is no relationship between the traffic wardens' employment duration and job stress.

H5: Traffic wardens do not feel that they are being provided with the necessary equipment to carry out their job duties effectively.

Methodology

Sample

Fifteen participants were selected for qualitative interviews while 50 participants (all males, Mage = 41.72 years, SD = 9.94) data was collected through survey questionnaire. Convenience sampling was used. Participant selection was based on the inclusion criteria that they be of any age but currently serving in the traffic police department in Karachi. Since no female wardens could be found, they were not included in the sample.

Measurements

A mixed method 'Sequential Exploratory' is used in this study (Creswell, 2003).

Qualitative data: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with probing to gather the insights of the participants. Questions were asked pertaining to the physical and psychological demands faced by traffic wardens, the resources provided to them to meet their job demands and suggestions for improvement were also sought.

Quantitative data: The participants were given (1) Informed Consent Form to obtain permission. (2) Demographic Sheet asking age, gender, academic qualification, marital status, hours of duty and their usual area of duty posting. (3) Self-made Questionnaire developed and translated in Urdu out of The Workplace Stress Scale (WSS) and Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), having 15 items, responses were taken on a 5-point Likert type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree). Cronbach alpha values were calculated separately for WSS came to .797 and for JSS it was .582. Despite of low alpha value on JSS, data is still utilized because low alpha value inferred that some of the items were not representing the domain of traffic wardens job.

Data analysis

Version 21 of SPSS was utilized. One Sample t-tests was used to analyze the traffic wardens' perception of job satisfaction, job stress, and provision of adequate resources. Pearson product-movement correlation was applied to check for association of employment duration with job satisfaction and job stress. For the qualitative data, themes were drawn out and the indicators were highlighted from the responses.

Results

Qualitative findings: From the interviews conducted, there are two major themes relating to challenges faced by traffic wardens: physical and psychological challenges. The physical challenges revolved around unfavorable working conditions like long standing duty hours without adequate resting periods and places, lack of shades in many areas to protect from sun rays (with the problem getting worse in summer season), lack of basic on the job facilities such as washrooms (thus having to use public washrooms in mosques or restaurants etc. which causes embarrassment as well) and drinking water. Exposure to the sun and pollution were also cited as being responsible for causing

medical conditions such as skin infections, asthma, sinus, eye infections, and hearing problems, etc.

Psychological challenges like anxiety, anger, panic attacks etc. other than corruption and bribes should be explored as this constitutes economic problems. These challenges stem from various stressors such as unfavorable public attitude, insufficient pay and benefits, lack of residential, medical and educational facilities for the wardens and their families, and political pressures. According to all of the participants, insufficient pay and benefits are the major reasons of corruption in the traffic wardens. The stress of not being able to pay for the basic medical expenses of their families in case of need and the educational facilities of their children were cited as the most common reasons for accepting bribes from public. The interviewees also complained of not having received their due challan commission (a designated percentage of the total value of the challan issued by the warden) for the past five years which aggravated the problem of taking bribes.

Quantitative findings One sample t-test results (Table 1) show that the Scaled Satisfaction ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .62$) is significantly higher than the test value (3) at the .01 ($t = 3.872$, $df = 49$). Thus H1 is rejected that traffic wardens do feel satisfied with their jobs.

As far as H2 is concerned, the one sample t-test (Table 1) show that the Scaled Stress ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .85$) is not significant at $p < 0.05$ ($t = 1.038$, $df = 49$). Thus H2 is retained that traffic wardens do not feel significantly stressed because of their jobs.

Table 1

Results of One Sample t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Scaled Satisfaction and Scaled Stress

Outcome	M	SD	n	Comparison Value	95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
Scaled Satisfaction	3.34	.62	50	3	[0.16, 0.52]	3.872*	49
Scaled Stress	3.13	.85	50	3	[-.12, .37]	1.038	49

* $p < .01$.

Test statistics for the Pearson product-movement correlation (Table 2) indicate no significant correlation of employment duration with either Scaled Satisfaction ($r = -.269$, $p = \text{n.s.}$) or Scaled Stress ($r = .225$, $p = \text{n.s.}$). Thus, H3 and H4 are not rejected. There is no significant relationship of traffic wardens' employment duration with job satisfaction or job stress.

Table 2

Results of Pearson product-moment Correlation for Employment Duration with Scaled Satisfaction and Scaled Stress

	Scaled Satisfaction			Scaled Stress		
	r	Sig.	n	R	Sig.	n
Employment Duration	-.269	.059	50	.225	.116	50

One sample t-test results for satisfaction with provided equipment (Table 3) indicate that it is not significant ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.148$) at $p < .05$. Thus, H_5 is retained. Traffic wardens do not feel that they are being provided with the necessary equipment to carry out their job duties effectively.

Table 3

Results of One Sample t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Satisfaction with provided equipment (Item 2)

Outcome	M	SD	n	Comparison Value	95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
Satisfaction with provided equipment	3.32	1.148	50	3	[-0.11, 0.55]	1.355	49

Discussion

The findings of the study should be looked at in the light of government offices perception and opinions of general public, which will enable us to identify some valid reasons to the behaviors under study. First of all, government jobs are desired by people due to high job security, housing benefits, pension benefits after retirement, low accountability, and authoritative status in the society. But this also comes with government officials perceived as corrupt, taking bribes, relaxed work environment (almost no accountability), strong political support etc. due to all the above reasons, the attitude of public towards traffic wardens can be interpreted (FAFEN Survey 2016). The criteria of selection for law enforcement government offices have mostly found to be the bribes that are taken by high-ups ensuring a seat.

Results of the current study insinuated that traffic wardens appeared to be satisfied with their job and reported moderate or low job stress. Moreover, the duration of their job had no apparent relationship with their job satisfaction and stress. This trend was also observed during qualitative interviews with the participants. Most of the participants reported that though the job had its own

challenges, however, they were grateful to be able to provide livelihood for their families. Their job satisfaction stemmed from the fact that they were a part of the employed community and that they were contributing to the society, some even equated their job as being a form of worship promoting job satisfaction.

They reported that their job provided them with security and a particular status in society that is relatively better than many other private jobs. Additionally, given that the minimum academic criteria for service as a traffic warden is Matriculation, they seem to be left with meager options regarding comparable job opportunity whilst living in a developing country like Pakistan. They seem to be satisfied with acquiring a job that is regarded as respectable to a certain extent. The context of government offices and jobs can here be related where despite of harsh working conditions participants reported moderate job satisfaction.

On the other hand, it may be possible that the participants' reported satisfaction and low stress levels owing to social desirability effect. Few of them did not desire to answer some of the questions since they did not want to be seen in a negative light, nor did they want to unveil any negative aspects of their job that may lead up to adverse consequences for them. Hesitance to answer the questions and not allowing their verbatim to be was a common concern. Some even refused to fill the questionnaire claiming that they had been explicitly ordered not to indulge in such activities without prior permission from their senior officers.

However, as opposed to the findings of this study with reference to the first research question, the literature states otherwise. For example, Kanchana, Vijayalakshmi and Sudha (2012) reported from their findings on the stress and satisfaction levels of traffic wardens in Tamil Nadu, India that the fact that the respondents are unable to devote time to their families and unsafe working environment are the leading causes of stress. The lack of satisfaction in their job comes from the prolonged duty hours and the ongoing pressure to discharge duties. This research also supports the views of Zhang, (2009), who concluded from his findings that the prominent factors effecting the job satisfaction of traffic policemen are; work stress, interpersonal relations with coworkers, the work returns, working environment, recognition in society, personal development and management.

It was discovered that due to the increase of traffic pollution in urban areas, participants were continually exposed to dangerous fumes which gave rise to certain infections such as asthma and skin infections. This finding was also discussed by Dragonieri et al. (2006) who concluded that due to the outdoor pollution, traffic policemen are exposed to air pollution which gives rise to airway constriction and shortness of breath. Our results are also in agreement with the findings of Qayyum (2015) who ascertained that due to the hazardous fumes emitted by vehicles, it not only pollutes the surrounding air but also causes eye infection, asthma, cancer and other related infections in traffic wardens.

The participants of this study further reflected that their pay is inadequate with low medical benefits, no commissions on the tickets they issue and that their job does not provide them housing. These views were reinforced by Chaudhry (2016), who highlighted after interviewing various traffic wardens in Karachi, Pakistan, that due to corruption in the city, the traffic wardens cannot even rely

on the 15% disbursements they use to get from the commissions from challan. Also, their salary is just mere 35,000 Pakistani rupees which forces them to survive on chutney and onions (poor man's meal) with a meager Rs. 300 for medical allowance.

The results also inferred that the participants of the study were frequently subjected to aggression from the public which included threats and vulgar language. A one sample t-test of the stress item relating to public attitude ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.432$) shows significant stress at $p < .05$ (Table 3) being perceived due to the attitude of the public. These findings are in accordance with those uncovered by Chaudhry (2016) who stated that traffic police men were every now and then harassed by civilians who would break the law and hurl all sorts of abuses and insults at them. Here again the findings can be related with the strong and existing perception of traffic wardens in the eyes of general public.

Table 4

Results of One Sample t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Stress due to public attitude (Item 15)

Outcome	M	SD	n	Comparison Value	95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
Stress due to public attitude	3.48	1.43	50	3	[0.07, 0.89]	2.37	49

Hanif (2015) stated that there is no existing school for the training of traffic police personnel nor are there any courses being offered for teaching the techniques of using new equipment, accompanied with the lack of adequate resources. Findings of this study suggested similar result based on interview responses; revealing that traffic wardens do not have a proper supply of water, shade or resting place.

As the current research shows no correlation of job satisfaction and job stress with employment duration, however, other demographic factors like; age, education, employment status, family income and number of years in job could also influence the level of job satisfaction and stress in one's life. Contemporary research claims that as employees increase in age so does their availability of resources which thereby increases job satisfaction. However, lack of correlation of employment duration with job satisfaction can be taken as an indicator of low promotion opportunities. Rather, the challenges continue regardless of how long the warden has been serving. Other researchers suggest that traffic policemen with increasing family income are less likely to suffer from burn out.

Though the results suggest that the wardens do not feel that adequate equipment is being provided to help them perform their job duties in the best of manners, a common observation during the interviews and informal discussion with other participants suggested that the wardens are actually not aware of the extent of technological advancement in equipment relevant to their field. One of the interviewee participants highlighted this aspect. Narrating from his experience of having been abroad,

he mentioned that those in service do not even know what is available 'out there'. Equipment such as radar guns for speed checking and drones for monitoring traffic situations; they are not even in the knowledge base of most of the wardens, let alone they ask for provision of such equipment that would make their jobs much easier. Furthermore, because of their educational backgrounds, it is also possible that the wardens may feel hesitant at being provided equipment that may prove to be difficult for them to utilize effectively. The wireless challan machine is one such example where the wardens may feel reluctant to depart from the traditional way of issuing the ticket by hand.

While the traffic wardens of Karachi have been provided with wireless challan issuing devices, they have not been adequately trained regarding the entire functionality of the devices as became evident with their responses regarding the device during the conducted interviews. Psychological training related to various job related stressors (such as conflict management and crisis resolution etc.) should be provided and made mandatory for all personnel. Essentially, studies like this can give the traffic police department a different perspective and valuable insights into their employee's cognitions. Such that it can serve as a criterion for the overall improvement of the working conditions of the traffic police personnel. Thus, the first recommendation would be to carry out more of such researches especially by the Traffic Police department itself. Other improvements can be achieved by making the traffic management system more scientific and modern with the introduction of technologically advanced equipment such as Radar and LiDAR speed detection devices, wireless communication tools for swift communication among the force, remote operated camera equipped drones to overview traffic situations especially during rush hours, etc. Shining light rods for controlling traffic flow at night have been provided to the wardens in the past but have almost disappeared. They need to be reintroduced and their usage expanded to day time duty as well.

Moreover, traffic policemen should be equipped with protective equipment such as; ear plugs to protect their hearing from getting impaired, face masks and protective glasses to guard them from the hazardous fumes and dust particles, protective creams to prevent skin damage and diseases, etc. There should also be a framework in effect that would reduce the duty hours of the wardens or adjust break times, given the possible effects of prolonged exposure on their physical health.

Further, the pay structure of the traffic wardens should be revised along with improvised medical allowance and other benefits. Seniority of the wardens should be recognized and promotions and increments should be allotted in a timely manner. Adequate housing, medical and educational facilities must be provided to the wardens and their families.

Considering that neither their recruitment process nor the active job duty period comprises of any contact with a psychologist, it is highly advised that both on-job and off-job psychological support (in the form of psychotherapists and counselors) should be provided to help them deal with stress provoking (and often traumatizing) job conditions (such as witnessing accidents and deaths). There may even be the need to provide such support to the family members of the wardens to reduce the possibility of job stress affecting the wardens' family and social life.

Limitations and Recommendations

The present study is limited mainly due to the fact that official support could not be taken from the authorities to help with data acquisition. Even the interviews could not be properly recorded and transcribed. The study was limited to a small sample size due to the availability factor.

Studies like this should be shared with higher ups of the department so that overall improvement in the working conditions and the other concerns of traffic wardens can be carried out. Training of technological equipment and psychological correlates should be provided to the traffic wardens.

Future studies should include female traffic wardens to get their perspective also.

Conclusion

The findings of the study show no relation of employment duration with levels of job satisfaction and stress, suggesting an average level of satisfaction and no perceived (significant) stress. As concluded from our qualitative findings, this trend is observed due to the traffic wardens self-fulfilling belief that they are serving their society the best way.

The latter results nevertheless support most of the views presented in the literature review and shows that the plight of traffic wardens are a product of many factors. The most prominent ones are: lack of resources, lack of training, public conflict, poor salaries with low aspects of promotions and negligence of infrastructure facilities for them. Altogether, these factors give rise to both physical and psychological demands, which in turn can have adverse effects on their job performance, job satisfaction and stress.

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